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From: Countryman, Kevin
Sent: Wed 8/26/2015 6:53:10 PM
Subject: RE: 10-year-old Gold King article Local Opposition to SF designation, passing of blame among operators

. Underlined body text reflects emphasis that I've made.

--Kevin C.

First of 3 Articles you might find interesting:

http://www.denverpost.com/environment/ci_28624471/animas-river-spill-gold-king-mine-one-many-area-releasing-heavy

The above article recounts, in a nutshell, the Gold King owner's case against Sunnyside owners (first Echo Bay, then Kinross), and how the State of Colorado let Sunnyside off the hook.

A 2nd Article

http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28625241/silverton-residents-reconsider-need-superfund-light-spill;

The article describes the pre-existing conditions along the Animus, and the state of denial among the locals concerning Superfund status.

Esper said the red rocks in Cement Creek have always been red and life in the creek and the Animas River in that area has always been scarce.

That is because for decades the mines in the Upper Animas district have leaked acidic water laced with various heavy metals into Cement Creek, the result of almost a century of mining in the region.

And for decades, state and federal officials have talked about cleaning up the site using federal funds, but have faced opposition from local residents and mining companies.

Although many Silverton residents remain skeptical of the Environmental Protection Agency,

some say it's time for a federal cleanup.

"We knew there was a problem at Gladstone (a ghost town near the mine)," said Bev Rich, chairwoman of the San Juan County Historical Society. "And we knew that we needed to deal with it. But we didn't deal with it."

Bill Simon, co-coordinator of the Animas River Stakeholders Group, said state officials began investigating water quality in Cement Creek in 1989 after discovering that aquatic life was nearly nonexistent in the river.

He said after extensive water quality testing, the EPA was ready to add the entire Upper Animas River watershed to the Superfund National Priorities List by 1994.

The rest of the article focuses on the passing of blame (the initial stages of which are covered in the Prendergast articles I've already shared). Some of the more recent developments are mentioned in the excerpt below.

"I have been begging Kinross (current owner of Sunnyside Gold Corp.) to step forward voluntarily and be proactive and address the issues," Hennis said. "They were trying to get out of any potential liability at a very cheap price."

Kinross issued a statement Tuesday.

The company described last week's spill as a "very unfortunate incident," but denied any involvement.

"Sunnyside mine workings have no physical connection to the Gold King and such a connection never existed," according to the statement. "Sunnyside is not the cause of the water build up at Gold King."

Marcie Bidwell is executive director of the Mountain Studies Institute, a nonprofit environmental research organization that has been involved in monitoring river changes since last week's discharge.

She said Tuesday it was "very possible" that runoff from Sunnyside Mine escaped through fractures into nearby mines.

Since 2008, Simon said the EPA has talked about a "targeted" Superfund limited to the Upper Animas Mining District. Sunnyside Gold Corp., a member of Animas River Stakeholders Group, offered \$6.5 million to address water quality issues in the targeted area.

The catch, according to Simon, was the EPA had to release Sunnyside Mine Corp. from liability.

"The EPA has not really bought off on that," Simon said. "But the money is still there and the EPA recently requested they do some (remediation work) and pay for it from the \$6.5 million fund, which is supposed to have risen to \$10 million in that amount of time."

According to Simon, the EPA has not agreed to release Sunnyside from liability.

Hennis said \$10 million is not nearly enough to adequately remediate the mining district.

Simon said that since the Gold King Mine spill, he has reflected on his organization's previous opposition to the Superfund designation.

"We were dead set against Superfund at the time, but I would not say that is the case now,"
Simon said.

A 3rd Article

This link <http://www.durangoherald.com/article/20150214/NEWS01/150219763/Is-Silverton-ready-for-a-cleanup>

discusses softening local opposition to Superfund designation.

Even three years ago, it was impossible to imagine, let alone hear, a Silverton resident publicly clamoring for federal intervention in Cement Creek, said Mark Esper, editor of The Silverton Standard. Yet in the last year, he said, there have been signs that locals' hostility to Superfund is softening. This month, Skinner said a Superfund listing would "raise property values here, provide great jobs that people here can do, bring new people in and get more kids in the school."

Silverton resident John Poole said, "Many people, including myself, think Superfund, frankly, is the best thing that could happen to Silverton. It's certain to open up jobs. In Leadville, Superfund certainly didn't hurt tourism."

...

Poole said he thought the notion of Silverton's overwhelming opposition to Superfund was "grossly overblown."

"As far as I'm concerned, all the opposition is coming from a few people with conflicts of interest, who oppose the EPA because they profit financially from keeping the myth of mining – the idea that mining will come back to Silverton – alive," Poole said.

...

But Poole was among Silvertonians who said he has become impatient with the collaborative process, saying Sunnyside, which denies liability for the mine pollution, merely is proposing a "game plan" to avoid Superfund.

"Now, they're just making public-relations offers because as a deep-pocketed party, they're trying to avoid liability."

...

A majority of the San Juan County commissioners say they still support the ARSG and object to Superfund.

Commissioner Scott Fetchenhier said, "Right now, our stance is that we don't want Superfund to come in. We want the stakeholders' approach. They've spent 20 years on it, and we want to give them one more chance. Let's see how plugging the Red and Bonita works."